Loyola University Chicago
Comm 272 – 201: Web Design and Usability
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45
Classroom : School of Communication (51 East Pearson) Rom 003

Professor Patricia Lamberti
Office: SOC Room 223
Office Hours:
Mondays 3-4 p.m.
Tuesdays 1-2p.m.
Or by appointment

Office Phone: (312) 915-6860

Email: plamberti@luc.edu

Course description
Every student of communication should understand how people understand and use web
and mobile sites and what makes for well-designed web site.

Jakob Nielsen, a leader in the field of online usability, says usability is defined by **5
quality components**:
  • **Learnability**: How easy is it for users to accomplish basic tasks the first time they
    encounter the design?
  • **Efficiency**: Once users have learned the design, how quickly can they perform
    tasks?
  • **Memorability**: When users return to the design after a period of not using it, how
    easily can they reestablish proficiency?
  • **Errors**: How many errors do users make, how severe are these errors, and how
    easily can they recover from the errors?
  • **Satisfaction**: How pleasant is it to use the design?

Wordpress, Squarespace and Wix have made building a web site easy by providing
customers with hundreds of template options. But not every template (or web site
building tool) is created equal.

Some templates aren't easy for users to navigate. Others scream "template," and
therefore, don't show potential clients, customers or employers that you are a unique
person whose wheelhouse includes advanced visual communication skills. In this class,
we will learn how to create a web site using a template available on Wix or Wordpress,
and how to make that template more usable and customized with advanced tools.

For this class, you have two options – to create a web site about yourself that will
showcase your resume, personality, services and work samples. If you already have an

online portfolio that you are satisfied with, you can create a web site for a small business or organization that doesn't yet have one, or needs a new one.

Shockingly, many small businesses still don't have web sites. According to Yodle, an online marketing firm, 52% of small business owners don't have web sites for their businesses.

Topics covered in this class will include the pros and cons of each web site building tool, how to find and buy a domain name, usability, font choice, formatting text for the web, web site navigation, e-commerce solutions, writing interesting and SEO friendly content, style sheets, testing usability, optimizing web sites for mobile devices, analytics and the best uses of multimedia.

Learning objectives:

In this course, students will:

- Develop skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals working in online communication and businesses.
- Develop creative capacities (writing, treating photos, using various software programs, etc.).
- Develop skills in expressing ideas through writing and visual storytelling.
- Learn how to create and design a web site for himself or herself or a small business.
- Learn how to format text for the web.
- Create videos, interactive graphics, and other multimedia.
- Learn basic coding and develop an understanding of CSS.
- Master advanced Wix and Wordpress features
- Develop an understanding of web site analytics.
- Develop an understanding of SEO and Google page rankings.

Course Materials
- "Don't Make Me Think, Revisited" by Steve Krug. ($22.51 to rent on Amazon)

- Free weekly readings – see links under "homework"

- A domain name that is strongly related to your first and last name, or the organization you're creating a site for.

Course Policies – IMPORTANT! READ THIS!

Absences and Tardiness:
In order to achieve success in this class, it will be imperative that you attend class and arrive on time. Learning should be enjoyable, and I will do my best to make this class engaging. I sincerely hope you want to attend every class.

But stuff sometimes happens. If you need to miss a class due to an illness or emergency, you need to:

1. Notify me beforehand via email or phone and let me know
2. Provide documentation that explains your absence

It is up to my discretion to accept this documentation or not. If your excuse is valid and verified, you may make up whatever you missed.

If you don't explain your absence, or provide documentation, and your excuse is not valid, your absence will not be excused and you cannot make up the work.

Missing class will result in lower scores in the areas of participation, professionalism and quizzes. Your grades in these areas start at **zero** (not 100), and you earn points as the semester progresses and you complete the assignments, all of which are in-class. **I do not calculate these grades until the end of the semester.** This absence policy does not apply on days that a project is due.

Deadlines:
I will be treating you like professionals, which means deadlines MUST be met. You cannot negotiate or fib your way out of meeting a deadline.

Unfortunately, because of numerous problems in the past dealing with the issue of late assignments, this class has a very rigid late policy with harsh penalties. An assignment is considered late if you do not turn it in at the beginning of class (or get it to me per assignment) on the day it is due. In other words, don't come into class 20 minutes late the day an assignment is due and think you can still turn it in without penalty. Assignments not submitted by the given deadline will lose one letter grade every day (not class period) they are late. On the sixth day after the due date, your grade becomes an automatic zero (not somewhere in the F range).

If you are not attending class on the day an assignment is due, you must notify me beforehand via email. You must have a legitimate, documented excuse to miss class the day an assignment is due. Otherwise, you must accept the one-letter-grade-per-day penalty.

Academic Dishonesty Policy:
Plagiarism of any form, of any kind and of any length will be reported to the Dean of Students. As you know, plagiarism constitutes using another's words or ideas without acknowledgment.

If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the assignment or the class, depending on the severity of the situation.

Cheating on in-class assignments or any other work associated with this class will receive a similar punishment.

SSWD Policy:
Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Students will provide professors with an accommodation notification from SSWD, preferably within the first two weeks of class.

If attendance will be an issue, you must meet with me to complete a form that outlines how we will handle such absences within the first two weeks of classes.

Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. For more information or further assistance, please call 773.508.3700.

Email policy:
I will respond to all emails within 24 hours.

Keep in mind that I may not check my email right before an assignment is due. Ask questions early and re-read the assignment sheet. Often, the answer is there.

Laptop and cell phone policy:
Although technology is an integral part of communication, it doesn't always help you learn. The more you multitask, the less you learn. Multitasking is also disruptive to me and the students around you.

Studies have shown the following:
1. According to Winona State University researchers, 68% of students who use laptops in the classroom aren't using them just to take notes – they're also surfing the web, checking Facebook and email, etc.
2. Standford researcher Clifford Nass has found that multitaskers perform worse than non-multitaskers in nearly every category, including critical thinking skills and memory tests.
3. Researchers at Princeton and the University of California, Los Angeles had students in a lecture take notes on either laptops or pen and paper. Understanding of the lecture, measured by a standardized test at the end of the class, was worse for those who had taken notes on their laptops.

You are old enough to vote. You are old enough to join the military. You are old enough to be sent to an adult prison. You are old enough to fall in love, adopt a pet and in some cases, drink a beer. So out of respect for your age, I won't treat you like a child and *demand* that you not use your laptop during class. Just know this – the only person you're hurting is yourself. If your tech-behavior starts to distract others, I'll lower the participation portion of your grade.

Grading:

I guarantee you that in five years, you won't remember what grade you earned in this class.

At best, grades motivate you to learn as much as you can.

In the worst-case scenario, grades make you feel bad about yourself, question your life goals and hate school.

When thinking about grades, keep a few things in mind.

Grades don't always indicate how much you're getting out of a class, or school overall.

When you were in elementary school and high school, teachers and parents used grades to help keep you on task and unearth your talents.

But you are now an adult. It is your responsibility to learn as much as you can, keep yourself on task and uncover your passions. Grades may help you do this, but grades aren't your only guide on this road.

As an adult, you need to push yourself to learn – without the reward or punishment of a grade.

Getting As on assignments shouldn't be a reason to tell yourself, "I am a master at this. I don't need to try anymore. I'm checking out." You're not a master yet. An A means you're exceptional for a student in college. You can always improve.

Likewise, getting Cs shouldn't be a reason to give up. In fact, a C makes sense. That's an average grade, and you just started doing this.

I take a lot of time to make my grading policy transparent. You will receive a rubric for each assignment.

I will always evaluate your work and provide you with an explanation of why you've earned your grade.

Your first assignment is worth less than latter ones. After all, as you learn, you should get better.

The in-class assignments are purely for practice. I will look at them. But you either earn an A for putting some degree of effort into it and an F if you don't.

Quizzes on the readings will occur nearly every week. You are expected to read your assignments before class begins.

Please remember that I do not grade based on effort alone. I will not give you an A on one of the assignments simply because you tried your best.

Participation and Professionalism:
You will never be penalized for voicing your opinions, whatever they may be.

You will, however, be penalized for disrupting the class. Talking on cell phones, texting, interfering with classmates, e-mailing, arriving late/leaving early, sleeping, closing your eyes and hoping I don't notice, instant messaging and using computer programs other than the ones we are working on in class will lead to a lowering of the professionalism portion of your grade.

The golden rules? While we are talking, don't touch anything electronic. While we are using the computer, only use software we are working with.

The number of classes you miss will also affect your professionalism and participation grades. You can't participate if you're not in class. Not coming to class is also not very professional. If you don't notify me in advance of your absences, you will receive a lower score in this area.

The grading scale for participation is as follows:

A: Frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussion that show insight and understanding of material.
B: Frequent and meaningful contribution to class discussion.
C: Occasional participation to class discussion.
D: Only participates when called upon.
F : No class participation

Grade disputes:
You may not agree with a grade I give you. If you think you deserve a better grade, **you must write one to two paragraphs explaining why and visit me in my office to discuss the matter.**

Final grade breakdown:

Pop quizzes and in-class activities: 100 points

Professionalism/Professionalism: 100 points

Domain name explanation and purchase plan: 50 points

Wix vs. Wordpress paper: 100 points

Web site version one: 200 points

Usability test: 150 points

Final web site: 300 points

Individual Assignment Grade Scale:
A: 100-94
A-: 93-90
B+: 89-88
B: 87-83
B-: 82-80
C+ 79-78
C: 77-73
C-: 72-70
D+: 69-68
D: 67-63
D-: 62-60
F: 59-0

Total Semester Grade Point Scale:

Grades are absolutely not rounded up at semester's end

A: 1000-940
A-: 939-900
B+: 899-880
B: 879-830
B-: 829-800
C+ 799-780
C: 779-730
C-: 729-700
D+: 699-680
D: 679-630
D-: 629-600
F: 599-0

Schedule

Subject to Change
Readings listed under Homework should be completed by Tuesday of the following week

Week one:

Lecture: What is usability? What is UX Design? Is that "someone else's problem?"

Homework (due next Tuesday):

- Critically evaluate the sites on the first two pages of
  http://www.awwwards.com/css-gallery. Pick your favorite site and be prepared
  to discuss why you chose that site.

- Read chapter one of "Don't Make Me Think!"

Week two:

Lecture: Options for creating a web site for free (Wix, Squarespace, Wordpress, etc.)

Homework:
- Read Usability 101: http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-101-
  introduction-to-usability

- Read Chapter Two DMMT: How we really use the web

- Read "Wix vs Wordpress vs Squarespace"
  https://www.tytonmedia.com/blog/squarespace-vs-wix-vs-weebly-vs-
  wordpress/

Week three:

Lecture: How to wireframe; information architecture

Homework:

- Overview of web fundamentals:
  https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/
- App shell model:
  https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/architecture/app-shell
- Basics of UX
      https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/design-and-ux/ux-basics/

Week four:

Assignment due Thursday: Wordpress vs. Wix Decision Paper Due

Lecture: Overall Design

Homework:
- Read Chapter 3: Billboard Design 101

Week five:

Assignment Due: Domain name decision (should be paid for by the time of final)

Lecture: Tag lines and SEO

Homework:
- Read Chapter 4: Animal, Vegetable or Mineral?

- Read "Tag Line Blues" http://www.nngroup.com/articles/tagline-blues-whats-the-site-about/

Week six:

Lecture: You are not the user of your web site

Homework:
- Read Chapter 5: Omit Needless Words
- Read "SEO and Usability" http://www.nngroup.com/articles/seo-and-usability/

Week seven:

Lecture: Fonts and menus

Homework:

- Read Chapter 6: Street Signs and Breadcrumbs

- Google Introduction to Variable Fonts https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/design-and-ux/typography/variable-fonts/

Week eight:

Assignment Due: Web Site Version One Due

Lecture: Home and Category pages

Homework:

- Read Chapter 7: The Big Bang Theory of Web Design.

- Read "UX Guidelines for Ecommerce Homepages, Category Pages, and Product Listing Pages"

https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ecommerce-homepages-listing-pages/?utm_source=Alertbox&utm_campaign=36e4b92da8-ecommerce_guidelines_infographics_2018_08_13&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7f29a2b335-36e4b92da8-24204617

Week nine:

Lecture: "About me" doesn't mean "I am a junior at Loyola"

Homework:
- Read FAQs Deconstructed http://www.nngroup.com/articles/faq-ux-deconstructed/

- Read "About Us on Web Sites: http://www.nngroup.com/articles/about-us-information-on-websites/

- Read "Chapter 8: The Farmer and the Cowman should be friends"

Week 10:

Lecture: Usability testing

Homework:

- Read Chapter 9: Usability testing on 10 cents a day"

- Read "Usability for $200" http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-for-200/

Week 11:

Lecture: Mobile sites

Homework:

- Read Chapter 10: Mobile: Not just a city in Alabama

- Read "Mobile sites vs. Apps" http://www.nngroup.com/articles/mobile-sites-vs-apps-strategy-shift/

Week 12:

Assignment due: Usability test

Lecture: CSS and consistency

Homework:

- Read Chapter 11: Usability as a common courtesy

Week 13:

Lecture: Security and clients

Homework: When clients want the moon not the roof; Security

- Read "Chapter 12: Accessibility and you"

- Watch Learn Security with Google https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgEIo7ZSkbQ

Week 14:

Lecture: Analytics and Final Project Work

Homework:

- Read Chapter 13: Guide for the Perplexed

Week 15:

Lecture and homework: Final project

Final due at the start of finals time: Final Web Site